

The VICTIM Act

Background

[21,570 people](#) were murdered in the United States in 2020, the highest number since 1995 and a [29.4% increase](#) from 2019. The increase in murders from 2019 to 2020 is the largest one-year jump since the FBI began maintaining records on the statistic in 1960. Moreover, this rise occurred across the United States, regardless of geography or the political demographics of an area.

Just as murders increased across the United States, the clearance rate for murders—or the percentage of murder cases solved by law enforcement agencies—[fell](#) from 61.4% in 2019 to 54.4% in 2020. This drop was even more pronounced in cities with more than 250,000 residents, where the clearance rate fell sharply from 57.6% in 2019 to 47.3% in 2020. Tragically, minorities disproportionately suffer from murders and poor clearance rates in the United States: Black victims made up [at least 46%](#) of those murdered in 2020 even though Black Americans comprise 13.4% of the U.S. population, and [local](#) & [national](#) reports show that cases involving Black and Hispanic victims go unsolved at substantially higher rates than those involving white victims. The latter statistic also applies to non-fatal shootings, which—although they typically differ from fatal shootings due to mere [chance](#)—tend to have clearance rates even lower than murders, since murder cases receive [more media and investigative attention](#). An additional and insidious cost of failing to resolve shooting cases is that residents of a community with low clearance rates are [more likely](#) to distrust the police.

Summary

The “Violent Incident Clearance and Technological Investigative Methods Act of 2021,” or the “VICTIM Act of 2021,” establishes a grant program at the Department of Justice (DOJ) to help State, Tribal, and local law enforcement agencies improve their clearance rates for homicides and non-fatal shootings.

These grants will be used to improve clearance rates for homicides and non-fatal shootings by: training detectives and police personnel to investigate, solve, and respond to homicides and non-fatal shootings; hiring additional detectives, officers, and personnel to support these efforts; and investing in technology needed by law enforcement agencies for these efforts. These grants will also be used to train police personnel to address the needs of victims and family members of homicides and non-fatal shootings, and to provide victims and family members with mental health resources and assistance with shelter, wage, and relocation costs.

Recipients of VICTIM Act grants would be required to report to the DOJ statistics regarding their use of the money. The National Institute of Justice will conduct periodic evaluations of the grant programs and their practices and procedures to identify which successfully improved clearance rates for homicides and non-fatal shootings. Information from this report, in addition to data collected by individual grant recipients, will be compiled by the DOJ and provided to Congress.